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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 20 February 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you of the continuing turmoil and deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, due to the illegal, provocative policies being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. Israel continues to carry out grave violations of international law, ranging from the killing and injury of Palestinian civilians by means of excessive force against unarmed, defenceless civilians; military raids and mass arrests and detentions, including of children; demolitions of Palestinian homes and properties; and incessant provocations and incitement by settlers and Israeli Government officials against the Palestinian people. These actions have continued and escalated in the recent period, threatening to further destabilize the already fragile situation on the ground and to thwart the peace negotiations currently under way.

Since our last letter, dated 6 February 2014 (A/ES-10/615-S/2014/82), the following illegal practices have been committed by Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population, a population devoid of protection and whose human rights are undeniably being systematically, grossly and deliberately violated by the occupying Power, with many of those violations amounting to war crimes. These crimes also include those committed by Israeli settlers, whose illegal actions are being perpetrated in full view of the occupying forces, who continue to fail to hold settlers accountable for their crimes. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of the crimes committed since our letter of 6 February, but only a sample of the extensive Israeli violations that continue to be perpetrated on a daily basis.

- In a clear act of incitement and provocation, right-wing Israeli Knesset member and Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Moshe Feiglin, entered Al-Aqsa compound on Wednesday, 19 February, escorted by Israeli police. Besides his

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hostile presence, Feiglin was heard saying that "*Al-Aqsa Mosque belongs to the Jews*". This act of incitement was preceded by the entry of right-wing Israeli Minister of Housing and Construction Uri Ariel to Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on Tuesday, 11 February, also with heavily armed Israeli forces. Such incitement and deliberate acts intended to provoke Palestinian, Arab and Muslim sensitivities must be viewed with utmost seriousness for these acts are heightening tensions and threaten to completely destabilize the fragile situation on the ground, especially in Occupied East Jerusalem.

- More than 500 Palestinians protesting Israel's unlawful and prolonged blockade were shot at by the Israeli occupying forces on Friday, 14 February, when they gathered near the fence along the northern Gaza Strip. Seventeen civilians were injured as a result of the indiscriminate shooting by the occupying forces at a civilian protest against Israel's constant aggressions and siege, further stoking tensions. In this regard, attention must also be drawn to the critical humanitarian situation due to the continuing Israeli blockade, which is preventing the revival of the economy and deepening poverty and unemployment, particularly among the refugee population, and which continues to obstruct the normal flow of persons and goods into and out of Gaza. This collective punishment against the Palestinian people must end, and Israel must be compelled to abide by its obligations under international law, particularly international humanitarian and human rights law.

- In yet another display of utter disregard for human life, on Thursday, 13 February, Israeli occupying forces killed another Palestinian civilian in Gaza, Ibrahim Suleiman Mansour, 26, while he was collecting gravel to sell.

- Israeli war planes also fired rockets at the northern Gaza Strip and Al-Nuseirat refugee camp, causing serious damage and panic and fear to spread among the civilian population on Tuesday, 11 February. Moreover, over the past week, Israeli occupying forces have continued to launch multiple air strikes against the Gaza Strip, including an air strike targeting a group of fishermen on the shores of Rafah on 19 February. Such attacks continue to cause injury to scores of Palestinians and cause extensive material damage to homes and properties.

- Various reports have revealed plans for more settlement construction throughout Occupied Palestine, particularly in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. In this regard, it was revealed this week that Israel intends to move ahead with a new settlement project in the Silwan area of Occupied East Jerusalem, including the construction of a so-called tourist centre on privately owned Palestinian land belonging to four families, who are facing the imminent confiscation of their land and forced displacement. Moreover, if this illegal project is undertaken, it will sever the links between Al-Haram Al-Sharif and its natural Palestinian environs. In addition, just this week, reports revealed plans by the Israeli Minister of Housing and Reconstruction for the construction of another illegal settlement consisting of thousands of settlement units in the Ein Karem area of the city. We condemn all such provocative and illegal colonization measures, which are physically destroying the two-State solution, and we reiterate the demand that Israel completely cease all settlement activities and comply with the relevant provisions of international law and United Nations resolutions.

- Extremist Israeli settlers destroyed 150 olive trees in the village of Al-Khader, near Bethlehem, on Tuesday, 11 February. On 19 February a settler in Al-Khalil ran over a seven-year-old Palestinian child, Ahmad Burqan, who was taken to the hospital with injuries. Also, at least 30 cars were vandalized in Occupied East Jerusalem in what is believed to have been yet another "price tag" attack by extremist Israelis against Palestinian civilians and their properties, which continue to be perpetrated with complete impunity.

- Israeli occupying forces shot live and rubber-coated bullets and tear gas canisters at peaceful Palestinian protestors in the West Bank towns of Kafr Qaddum, Beit Ummar, Al-Jalazun and Silwad on Friday, 7 February. Dozens of Palestinians were injured, many critically. Also, on 11 February, occupying forces attacked and fired gas bombs at dozens of schoolchildren in Silwan, leading to dozens of injuries and tear gas inhalation.

- On 17 February, occupying forces demolished five makeshift homes belonging to Palestinian Bedouin families, as well as a vegetable shop and a carwash, in Al-Eazzariya, near Occupied East Jerusalem, forcibly displacing again 55 Palestinians, including children, and destroying livelihoods. In this regard, we draw attention to a recent report issued by humanitarian aid agencies indicating that Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes has escalated in the recent period, with the 663 demolitions carried out in 2013 constituting the greatest number of demolitions in five years. The destruction of civilian property by the occupying Power, as well as the forced displacement of civilians, are illegal under international humanitarian law, and we call for an end to all such destructive measures by Israel against the Palestinian people.

The above-mentioned violations compel the Palestinian leadership to call on the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold the rule of law and human rights and demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease its military aggression against the Palestinian people, respect their human rights, including the right to peaceful protest, and comply with all of its legal obligations under international law. The continued failure to hold Israel accountable for its crimes and violations risks the total destabilization of the situation on the ground, with all of its consequences, including sabotaging the current peace talks, which enjoy global support and for which serious efforts are being exerted and to which the Palestinian leadership remains firmly committed, as demonstrated by the constant responsibility with which it has engaged with international and regional efforts in this regard, as well as in the context of the direct negotiations with Israel.

A strong, unequivocal message must be sent forthwith by the international community that it rejects Israel's illegal policies, intransigence and constant attempts to undermine and obstruct the prospects for realizing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and Quartet road map. At this critical juncture, no effort must be spared to salvage and advance the small opportunity for peace that remains before us.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 484 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 February 2014 (A/ES-10/615-S/2014/82), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the

occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations